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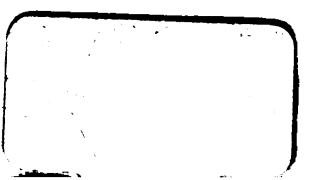

Chrysomela

A SELECTION FROM THE LYRICAL POEMS OF

ROBERT HERRICK

ARRANGED WITH NOTES BY

FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE

LATE FELLOW OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD

Hic nullus labor est, ruborque nullus:
Hoc iuvit, iuvat, et diu iuvabit

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1877

TO THE LADY

BEATRIX MAUD CECIL

My dear Maud:

This selection, over which I have hesitated for many months, has been made in the hope of rendering a poet, hitherto little known in proportion to his charm and his deserts, accessible to readers in general. Herrick's merits may be said to have placed him beyond the sympathy of his own age; his blemishes, beyond that of later times. Yet he was eminent for the felicity with which he united natural gifts to mastery over his beautiful art: and, from this happy union, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he may be still listened to with

pleasure as a true living voice, after the lapse of more than two centuries. Nor, unless I greatly overrate the value of his verse, will future ages 'willingly let it die,' whilst the love of beauty, and the magic of the past, two strong powers, retain their hold upon Englishmen.

Fair maidens, we read in the ancient tale, even whilst the dragon kept ward against all others, were free to range within the famous 'Gardens of the West.' Such, I please myself with anticipating, alone with Nature in those fortunate times of leisure which fall oftenest to their share, 'woman's quiet hours,' will enjoy the 'golden apples' which are here gathered together from Herrick's old 'Hesperides.' England is painted by him as she was left by Elizabeth; Nature and the human heart, spring and autumn, joy and sorrow, he paints as they are now and always have been. He may be read and read again: his book is of that peculiarly delightful and attractive kind which we think of, rather, as a companion or a friend.

These reasons, to which, as a pleasure to myself I must add your own pure taste and ability in art, have made me desirous to dedicate my book to you. It is not, indeed, a moment specially propitious to poetry!— The gate of Europe, like that other seen in vision by Milton, is now

With dreadful faces throng'd, and fiery arms:

men's minds are not in tune with the music of Helicon. Yet hence, also, a contrast arises which makes Poetry even more precious. 'The sweet Muses before everything,' 'dulces ante omnia Musae,' carry us with them to another and a better, if a more shadowy, world. We can there, it is true, have no abiding habitation: yet at times, quitting reality, with its hard dissonances, its restless revolution, it is lawful for us to dwell in the 'larger aether and purple light' which clothe the Elysian fields of art. That atmosphere some, (and you among them), breathe rather as natives than as visitors: there at least, whatever the loud world may be pursuing, are grace and harmony; there are peac

and permanence. Permanence, indeed, so far as man's work can seem to attain it, is to be found only in such record of noble deeds or lovely thoughts and images, as sculptor and painter, 'music and sweet poetry,' can provide.—Is that gift of enduring charm, beauty that will not fade, reserved for the verse contained in this little book?—I should not have cared to grace it with your name, were I not convinced that such will be Herrick's portion.

F. T. PALGRAVE

Jan. 13: 1877

ROBERT HERRICK:

BORN 1591 : DIED 1674

THOSE who most admire the Poet from whose many pieces a selection only is here offered, will, it is probable, feel most strongly (with the Editor) that excuse is needed for an attempt of an obviously presumptuous nature. The choice made by any selector invites challenge : the admission, perhaps, of some poems, the absence of more, will be censured :—Whilst others may wholly condemn the process, in virtue of an argument not unfrequently advanced of late, that a writer's judgment on his own work is to be considered final, and his book to be taken as he left it, or left altogether ; a literal reproduction of the original text being occasionally included in this requirement.

If poetry were composed solely for her faithful band of true lovers and true students, such a facsimile as that last indicated would have claims irresistible ; but if the first and last object of this, as of the other Fine Arts, may be defined in language borrowed from a

[illegible] present range of thought, as 'the greatest pleasure of the greatest number,' it is certain that less stringent [illegible] of reproduction are required and justified. The [illegible] of readers cannot bring either leisure [illegible] or information sufficient to take them through a large mass (at any rate) of ancient verse, [illegible] as Spenser's or Milton's. Manners and [illegible] again have changed; and much that [illegible] sometimes since, or at least sought [illegible] by a law against which protest is [illegible] the indecorous. Even unaccustomed [illegible] are an effort to the eye;—a kind of [illegible] which [illegible] the ease and enjoyment of the reader.

These hindrances and clogs, of very diverse nature, [illegible] by Poetry. In common with [illegible] which aims at human benefit, she must [illegible] not only to be 'useful': she has also the duty [illegible] to be a messenger from heaven, it is [illegible] to inspire as well as to elevate: to convert the [illegible] into a means of beauty. Every rough place that [illegible] must be made smooth: nor, in [illegible] must she fear that the way will ever be [illegible] or that she will be loved [illegible] be loved more widely.

[illegible] these general considerations, it is true [illegible] community with them, espe- [illegible] parts be concerned, parts with [illegible] the pleasure which poetry may [illegible] must thoroughly to be judged by [illegible] what he printed. A selector inevitably [illegible] a position over his author. The [illegible] which we have abandoned is an

interesting evidence how the tone of manners changes. The poet's own spelling and punctuation bear, or may bear, a gleam of his personality. But such last drops of pleasure are the reward of fully-formed taste; and fully-formed taste cannot be reached without full knowledge. This, we have noticed, most readers cannot bring. Hence, despite all drawbacks, an anthology may have its place. A book which tempts many to read a little, will guide some to that more profound and loving study of which the result is, the full accomplishment of the poet's mission.

We have, probably, no poet to whom the reasons here advanced to justify the invidious task of selection apply more fully and forcibly than to Herrick. Highly as he is to be rated among our lyrists, no one who reads through his fourteen hundred pieces can reasonably doubt that whatever may have been the influences,—wholly unknown to us,—which determined the contents of his volume, severe taste was not one of them. *Peccat fortiter*:—his exquisite directness and simplicity of speech repeatedly take such form that the book cannot be offered to a very large number of those readers who would most enjoy it. The spelling is at once arbitrary and obsolete. Lastly, the complete reproduction of the original text, with explanatory notes, edited by Mr Grosart, supplies materials equally full and interesting for those who may, haply, be allured by this little book to master one of our most attractive poets in his integrity.

In Herrick's single own edition of *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers*, but little arrangement is traceable: nor have we more than a few internal signs of date in composition. It would hence be unwise to attempt

grouping the poems on a strict plan : and the divisions under which they are here ranged must be regarded rather as progressive aspects of a landscape than as territorial demarcations. Pieces bearing on the poet as such are placed first ; then, those vaguely definable as of idyllic character, 'his girls,' epigrams, poems on natural objects, on character and life ; lastly, a few in his religious vein. For the text, although reference has been made to the original of 1647-8, Mr Grosart's excellent reprint has been mainly followed. And to that edition this book is indebted for many valuable exegetical notes, kindly placed at the Editor's disposal. But for much fuller elucidation both of words and allusions, and of the persons mentioned, readers are referred to Mr Grosart's volumes, which (like the same scholar's 'Sidney' and 'Donne'), for the first time give Herrick a place among books not printed only, but edited.

Robert Herrick's personal fate is in one point like Shakespeare's. We know or seem to know them both, through their works, with singular intimacy. But with this our knowledge substantially ends. No private letter of Shakespeare, no record of his conversation, no account of the circumstances in which his writings were published, remains : hardly any statement how his greatest contemporaries ranked him A group of Herrick's youthful letters on business has, indeed, been preserved ; of his life and studies, of his reputation during his own time, almost nothing. For whatever facts affectionate diligence could now gather. readers are referred to Mr Grosart's 'Introduction.'

But if, to supplement the picture, inevitably imperfect, which this gives, we turn to Herrick's own book, we learn little, biographically, except the names of a few friends,—that his general sympathies were with the Royal cause,—and that he wearied in Devonshire for London. So far as is known, he published but this one volume, and that, when not far from his sixtieth year. Some pieces may be traced in earlier collections; some few carry ascertainable dates; the rest lie over a period of near forty years, during a great portion of which we have no distinct account where Herrick lived, or what were his employments. We know that he shone with Ben Jonson and the wits at the nights and suppers of those gods of our glorious early literature: we may fancy him at Beaumanor, or Houghton, with his uncle and cousins, keeping a Leicestershire Christmas in the Manor-house: or, again, in some sweet southern county with Julia and Anthea, Corinna and Dianeme by his side (familiar then by other names now never to be remembered), sitting merry, but with just the sadness of one who hears sweet music, in some meadow among his favourite flowers of spring-time;—there, or 'where the rose lingers latest.' . . . . But 'the dream, the fancy,' is all that Time has spared us. And if it be curious that his contemporaries should have left so little record of this delightful poet and (as we should infer from the book) genial-hearted man, it is not less so that the single first edition should have satisfied the seventeenth century, and that, before the present, notices of Herrick should be of the rarest occurrence.

The artist's 'claim to exist' is, however, always far less to be looked for in his life, than in his art, upon the